



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

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State Health Department Announces Recipients of Funding for Colorectal Cancer Pilot Project

BISMARCK, N.D. – Heart of America Medical Center in Rugby, N.D., and MeritCare Roger Maris Cancer Center in Fargo, N.D., are grant recipients of the 2009-2011 Colorectal Cancer Screening Initiative, according to Joyce Sayler, program director with the North Dakota Department of Health's Comprehensive Cancer Prevention and Control Program.

The initiative is a state-funded colorectal cancer screening project, which is now in its second phase. The 2009 North Dakota Legislative Assembly appropriated \$300,000 to continue the rural component of the colorectal cancer screening project in the Rugby area and to expand to an urban area of the state, which will be implemented in Fargo and the surrounding communities. The initiative covers the cost of colonoscopies for low-income North Dakotans. The goal of the project is to assist in eliminating colorectal cancer screening barriers among the uninsured and underinsured by providing no-cost colorectal cancer screening to as many as 200 eligible participants. The project is administered by the North Dakota Department of Health.

"Colorectal cancer is the third-leading cause of cancer deaths in North Dakota – but it doesn't have to be," Sayler said. "Although research has shown that colorectal cancer screening for people 50 and older can significantly reduce mortality, North Dakota's screening rates remain low. Our goal with this pilot project is to reach people who may not otherwise have the tests done."

According to the 2008 North Dakota Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 42.1 percent of North Dakota men and women 50 years of age and older reported they have never received colorectal cancer screening. Every year an average of 430 North Dakotans are diagnosed with colorectal cancer and 120 will die of this disease.

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“The out-of-pocket cost for screening colonoscopies is one of the primary reasons North Dakotans do not receive this life saving procedure,” said Deb Knuth, Initiative Advisory Committee member and North Dakota Government Relations director for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. “This pilot project will help us save lives by reaching residents from the Fargo and Rugby areas who may not otherwise receive colorectal cancer screening tests.”

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